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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Winograd Probe Into 2nd Lebanon War

Key stories in the media:

All media led, and extensively reported and commented on the findings of the interim report of the Winograd Commission probing the Second Lebanon War. Yediot bannered a comment by associates of

PM Ehud Olmert likening the report's conclusions to a gun directed at Olmert's temple. All media reported that PM Ehud Olmert vowed on Monday night that he would not resign, despite the publication of the report, which the accused him of "severe failures" in handling the conflict. "It would not be correct to resign," he said in a brief televised statement from his office, "and I have no intention of resigning." Instead, Olmert said, he would work to implement the report's conclusions. He called a special cabinet session for Wednesday to begin the work, at which he plans to announce the creation of a special task to oversee the report's implementation, including both government officials and external experts. Media quoted Defense Minister Amir Peretz as saying that he would not quit his post despite the report's findings. Ha'aretz noted that FM Tzipi Livni and Vice PM Shimon Peres emerged unscathed from the report. The newspaper said that Livni kept her distance from Olmert. Maariv called Livni the "big winner."

All media reported that the Winograd Commission concluded that the decision to go to war was not based on a detailed, comprehensive, and authorized military plan, or on a clear analysis of the Lebanese situation. The media said that the government did not consider the whole range of options, that support for the operation was gained in part through ambiguity, that some of the declared goals were not clear and could not be achieved, and that the primary responsibility for those serious failings rests with Olmert, Defense Minister Peretz, and former IDF chief of staff Dan Halutz.

Israel Radio reported that senior IDF officers protested against an announcement sent by Halutz from Harvard University and about the fact that he did not bother to be in Israel for the publication of the Winograd report. The radio and other media reported that Halutz stated that he had assumed responsibility for his failings when he resigned.

In what it said was an expression of support for PM Olmert, Israel Radio quoted White House Press Secretary Tony Snow as saying on Monday: "Obviously, [President Bush] works very closely with Prime Minister Olmert, and thinks that he's essential in working toward a two-state solution. The President remains committed to it. We are not going to comment on, obviously, internal investigations within the Israeli government." However, The Jerusalem Post quoted Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Welch as saying on Monday, during an Anti-Defamation League conference in Washington: "You have political situations on each side that make it harder for the US leadership to move forward." The Jerusalem Post reported that Under Secretary for Political Affairs at the State Department Nicholas Burns later told the newspaper that the US was determined to press ahead with Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts. Burns declined to comment on how the political climate in Israel affects Olmert's ability to deliver on any agreements, saying that he did not want to appear to be meddling in internal Israeli affairs.

Leading media quoted a Hizbullah official as saying that the report confirms that Israel was in a state of confusion during the Second Lebanon War.

Yediot reported that on Monday a "senior Arab figure involved in the peace efforts in the region" commented on the conclusions of the Winograd report. He was quoted as saying that Olmert does not fulfill his promises anyway and that the Arabs will not be sorry if he goes home. The Arab figure was quoted as saying that, following the commission's findings, Olmert can be expected to create a media spin around the peace moves, but that he will very soon find out that he does not have a partner among the Arabs.

This morning the electronic media reported that, following the publication of the Winograd Report, Labor Party Secretary-General Eitan Cabel announced his decision to resign from the government, called on PM Olmert to act in kind, and on former PM Ehud Barak not to enter the government. The electronic media reported that this morning Labor Party leadership contender MK Ami Ayalon called on Olmert to resign and advocated the creation of a "national rehabilitation government."

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that on Monday Damascus-based Hamas leader Khaled Mashal threatened to kidnap more Israeli soldiers to obtain the release of Palestinians imprisoned in Israel. Mashal was

quoted as saying that a third Intifada might erupt if the condition of the Palestinians does not improve and if the siege on the PA continues.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the first-ever "radiation drill" in an Israeli hospital will be held on Tuesday at Rambam Medical Center in Haifa.

Ha'aretz reported that, with funding from the International Atomic Energy Agency, Israel, Jordan, and the PA are now working together to wage a biological war against the Mediterranean fruit fly.

The media reported that oligarch Arkady Gaidamak's advisers have announced that he plans to run for mayor in next year's municipal election in Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem Post reported that, despite widespread, often angry reports to the contrary, a controversial documentary to be directed by anti-Zionist Israel director Eyal Sivan marking Israel's 60th Independence Day next year has not been granted taxpayer money.

Yediot and Maariv reported that in the first half of 2008 Africa-Israel Investments, a large real estate company controlled by Israeli billionaire Lev Leviev, will be traded on the New York Stock Exchange. Major media reported that the company will purchase the New York Times building for USD 525 million, renovate it for USD 170 million, and extract high rental fees from it. The Jerusalem Post noted that the New York Times offices are expected to move into a new 52-story office tower on Eighth Avenue.

A Channel 2-TV poll taken after the Winograd report was released found that 65 percent of Israelis believe Olmert should quit and 75 percent that Peretz should resign. Only 14 percent said Olmert should remain in office and 10 percent that Peretz should stay. Fifty-three percent said Israel should go to elections. In a separate question on who they would vote for, the poll found that 26 percent of Israelis believe that Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu should be prime minister, followed by FM Tzipi Livni (9 percent), former prime minister Ehud Barak (6 percent), Labor MK Ami Ayalon (5 percent), Vice PM Shimon Peres (4 percent), Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Lieberman (3 percent), billionaire Arkady Gaidamak (2 percent), and Peretz (1 percent). Olmert received zero percent in the poll. Channel 10-TV and Israel Radio published similar surveys.

Winograd Probe Into 2nd Lebanon War:

Summary:

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The bottom line is that Ehud Olmert needs to go.... The full report is a courageous, ambitious, far-reaching attempt to change [Israel's] political culture."

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "If this government does not step down now, disgust and despair will mount."

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote on page one of Ha'aretz: "Can this government ... lead the nation in the next war ... and win? The conclusion drawn from the inquiry's report is a clear no, and therefore this government must step down in one way or another."

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv: "Winograd is bringing a big hose and in one fell swoop, is washing off the dust that covered the Israeli government."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "What is critical here is that Israel -- with Hizbullah and Palestinian extremists a constant threat, and their inspiration, Iran, marching toward nuclear capability -- be governed by a leadership of competence."

Veteran journalist Yosef (Tommy) Lapid, Chairman of the Yad Vashem

Council, and former justice minister wrote in Maariv:
"Responsibility for the army's lack of preparedness ... falls on the shoulders of the Sharon-Mofaz-Ya'alon troika, not on Olmert and Peretz."

Columnist and former Meretz Party Chairman Yossi Sarid wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Throw out Ehud Olmert and Amir Peretz and save Israel -- that's the battle cry now, that's the urgent mission of every citizen."

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in The Jerusalem Post: "If the Winograd report is to have any positive impact at all, it should be in beginning, not blocking the necessary public debate into the real sources of the failures last summer, and into the strategic failures of the Oslo process, and the withdrawals from Lebanon and Gaza. All of these call out for our attention and correction."

Block Quotes:

II. "He Needs to Go"

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (5/1): "The bottom line is that Ehud Olmert needs to go. Not because of the failings of the war, but because if after a report like that, from a commission like that, a commission whose members he chose and whose letter of appointment he wrote, Olmert continues to serve as prime minister, there will probably never be any personal accountability here. Israel will join the third world festival. With that having been said, he can still survive politically. Not because the war was a success but because the alternatives, even by the commission's standards, aren't any better. Neither Bibi [Binyamin Netanyahu], Tzipi [Livni], nor even Ehud Barak.... The full report is a courageous, ambitious, far-reaching attempt to change the political culture. [The commission] wishes for a different leadership, a compact government, whose ministers are experienced in the areas over which they are responsible; a government which seeks the help of experts from various and conflicting schools of thought; one which holds in-depth and broad-based debates about the issues it votes on; a government whose debates are kept secret and are not leaked. There are no such governments. Nor were there ever. The model that the members of the Winograd Commission envision exists only in the world of Plato, and not in a political environment in which elections are held -- in any event, not in Israel. That does not change the fact that Olmert made a grave mistake when he chose to appoint Amir Peretz as defense minister, and Peretz erred when he pounced on the job.... Last night, two hours after the report was published, the President of the United States issued a statement in support of Olmert. Olmert was pleased: it was a point of light in a black day. I suggested to him that as a sign of gratitude he propose to Bush to ask the Winograd Commission to come and investigate the war in Iraq."

II. "Immediate Resignation"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (5/1): "The Winograd Report contains not even one lenient word to which the Prime Minister could cling in order to extend his term. The members of the commission he appointed closed all the cracks and left no escape from responsibility -- if not now, then in two months, when

the final report is written.... If the Prime and Defense Ministers do not resign following the Winograd findings, their imperviousness will be additional proof that they were not worthy of their posts from the outset. Any attempt to share the failure with previous prime ministers will not succeed.... No harsher report than that of the Winograd Committee on the Second Lebanon War could have been written, even if a state commission of inquiry had been established.

The statements made on Monday, in precise and unequivocal language, are painful testimony to the culture of charlatanic, belligerent, and irresponsible government, whose existence the public has sensed for a long time. If this government does not step down now, disgust and despair will mount."

III. "Unfit to Run the Next War"

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote on

page one of Ha'aretz (5/1): "The key question arising from the Winograd Commission's partial report is not the level of personal responsibility for the failed management of the war. That is a question that relates in principle to the past. The more important question is the one that relates to the future: Can this government headed by Ehud Olmert lead the nation in the next war -- which according to intelligence estimates could take place -- and win? The conclusion drawn from the inquiry's report is a clear no, and therefore this government must step down in one way or another. This is not a conclusion drawn by the Winograd Commission. It is a question that is beyond the mandate given to the commission, but it must be at the top of the Israeli public's priorities. Many politicians are not dealing with this because they see the Winograd Commission's report as part of an election campaign in which they must utilize the situation to help their party.... The Winograd Commission pointed to the fact that an incorrect evaluation of Israel's strength had developed, along with a lacking evaluation of our enemies' learning ability. This is not necessarily an intelligence mistake; it is due to deep social processes the commission believes Israel is undergoing, including even changes in the national ethos."

IV. "Brotherhood of the Gallows"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv (5/1): "Ehud Olmert's people know the truth. It is bitter. The prime minister cannot remain in his position after such a report. The prime minister must go home. Olmert's people told him so on Monday.... Olmert's announcement on Monday that he is not prepared to resign is, in light of the

situation, playing against time. In Israel, dying is a lengthy, ugly process.... Winograd is bringing a big hose and in one fell swoop, is washing off the dust that covered the Israeli government.... This is the time to work on corrections, on substantial changes in how the Jewish state is managed. To create an internal structure for decision making.... It is not easy to see the dancing on the blood that began on Monday on Hizbullah's Al-Manar [television] station. These hysteric shouts of victory are hard to take and elicits sad thoughts about our excessive self-flagellation, about our need to convince the entire Arab world and, in general, that we lost this war. So a bit of proportion is in order: Hizbullah, the big victor in this war, is now fighting to 'go to the open areas south of the Litani River,' after controlling and lying around right up to the fence of the northern border. It lost its strategic missiles, as well as 800 of its fighters. Iran is seething at Nasrallah, who is still hiding in his bunker. All this does not sweeten our bitter pill, but we should not forget. And it is possible also to be proud that the Jewish state established an investigative committee. We established it not because we lost. We established it because we did not win."

IV. "A Failed Leadership"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (5/1): "With all due respect to the Prime Minister, and notwithstanding the personal focus of much of the reporting surrounding today's Winograd Commission interim report, the political career of Ehud Olmert is not the most pressing issue on the national agenda.... Olmert has rightly asserted from many platforms that his decision to launch an immediate military response to the bombardment of northern Israel and the kidnapping within our sovereign borders of two soldiers in July was overwhelmingly supported by his cabinet, opposition politicians and the public. The failure of the subsequent, belatedly named Second Lebanon War to defang the Hizbullah threat and reassert Israel's vital deterrent capability can by no means be laid solely at the then-new prime minister's door, as the Winograd interim report has made clear. A good part of it stems from miscalculations and errors in the years preceding the outbreak of the conflict, and must be ascribed to military officers and politicians who no longer hold central positions of power.... What is critical here is that Israel -- with Hizbullah and Palestinian extremists a constant threat, and their inspiration, Iran, marching toward nuclear capability -- be governed by a leadership of competence. In that context, today's Winograd report casts the

current leadership -- and that extends to the entire government, which 'failed in its political function' -- in a dismal light. The parliamentary process can force through the necessary change, and individual politicians must look to the national interest. If they do not do so of their own volition, the public should seek to force their hand. And if the public fails to do so, it has no one to blame but itself."

VI. "Minority View"

Veteran journalist Yosef (Tommy) Lapid, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council, and former justice minister wrote in Maariv (5/1): "My reservations [about the findings of the Winograd Commission] could be defined as a minority view: Everybody agrees that the army was not prepared for that war. The defense budget was cut every year, the regular army mostly policed the territories. Reservists did not train, equipment was missing. The Katyusha rocket threat.... Responsibility for the army's lack of preparedness ... falls on the shoulders of the Sharon-Mofaz-Ya'alon troika, not on Olmert and Peretz. The conclusion of the Winograd Commission that the political echelon did not grant enough consideration to the results of its decisions is a wishful afterthought.... [The commission] has ceased to be a commission of inquiry and is turning into a committee of historians.... What would have happened if the two politicians who recently entered their positions [Olmert and Peretz] had pushed the chief of staff -- against his opinion -- into a ground operation and it had turned out that the army was not prepared and that the number of casualties was a few times [that of the actual one]? Would the megalomania of Olmert and Peretz not have been blamed for the catastrophe that would have befallen Israel?.... The failure in the Second Lebanon War should be place at the politicians' doorstep. This is something we do not like to admit."

VII. "Throw Them Out of Office"

Columnist and former Meretz Party Chairman Yossi Sarid wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (5/1): "Throw out Ehud Olmert and Amir Peretz and save Israel -- that's the battle cry now, that's the urgent mission of every citizen. It is time for a national emergency operation in which all those involved will be thrown onto the ash heap of history. This nation has a large garbage bin, but it also has a large human stockpile from which new, clean people can be brought. The blundering duo, Olmert and Peretz, were not alone in overseeing the calamity. The entire cabinet of wretched creatures lent their deceitful hands to crafting this threat to our existence.... There is only one way to bring about a new arrangement from the foundation to the rafters -- by holding general elections. Not swapping posts from defense minister to finance minister, not musical chairs, not even waiting around inexplicably for the final report, as though there is anything left to wait for. There is nothing left to say now except goodbye. Just go home."

VIII. "What Commissions Cannot Do"

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in The Jerusalem Post (5/1): "The grandest of all Israeli failures was the Rabin-Peres government's decision to recognize the PLO and give it arms, land and legitimacy, ushering in the most deadly period of terrorism in Israel's history. This decision, [like other ones], has never been scrutinized by a commission. But, truly, the great pity is not that no commissions were formed to investigate these failures, as the Winograd Commission was formed to investigate the Second Lebanon War. The great pity is that Israeli society has yet to find the means to conduct a true public debate of our failures that could enable learning and corrective action. If the Winograd report is to have any positive impact at all, it should be in beginning, not blocking the necessary public debate into the real sources of the failures last summer, and into the strategic failures of the Oslo process, and the withdrawals from Lebanon and Gaza. All of these call out for our attention and correction."

JONES